

Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Juvenile Justice in Johnson County



Hon. Deborah Minot, Associate Judge, Sixth Judicial District

Our guiding principles

- Delinquency charges can have long-lasting and even permanent impacts
- Delinquency charges \neq “help”
- Most adolescent behaviors \neq crimes
- Less is more (most of the time)



The challenge

- reduce arrest rates FAIRLY *and*
- hold youth ACCOUNTABLE *and*
- preserve COMMUNITY SAFETY *and*
- support ALL OF OUR KIDS?



2013 Diversion Project

Reduce the # and
disproportionality of
disorderly conduct charges
that originate in our schools

WHY?

Follow the data...

- School charges = 15% total charges
- The #1 school charge = disorderly conduct
- Grotesquely disproportionate (90% black/African-American)
- Multi-system problem (school, police, probation, courts)



Desired outcomes

- Consistent, fair, and effective responses to behaviors
- Reduce # charges
- Reduce RED at all decision-points
- Establish trust and strong working relationships
- Build on success

Goals (accomplished)

- ✓ Developed graduated response to “disorderly” behaviors in school
- ✓ Developed written protocol for school, police, and JCO (When should police be called? When should charges be filed?)
- ✓ Developed a pre-arrest diversion program that began with the 2014-15 school year

The LADDERS program

Guiding Principles

- ★ LADDERS promises to:
 - Treat you with respect and dignity
 - Acknowledge your self-worth and individuality
 - Provide you with services that are based on your emotional *and* physical needs
- ★ LADDERS will be efficient and ethical. The program will produce outcomes that are positive for the youth involved.
- ★ LADDERS will cooperate with your family members, the police, the schools, and the public to make sure our programming meets both your needs and the community's.



LADDERS Staff



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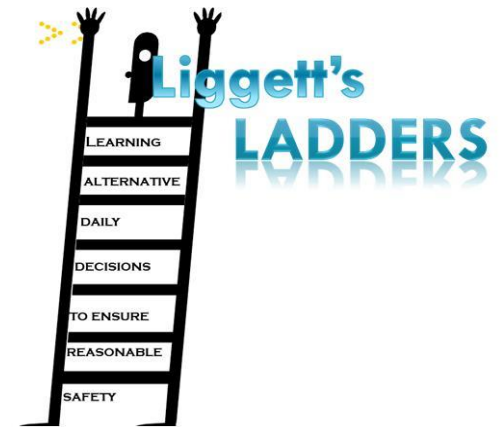
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Jan Liggett (1952-2014) was a passionate advocate for youth throughout her life. She created the first juvenile diversion program in Johnson County more than 30 years ago. LADDERS is administered by the staff of Linn County Juvenile Detention and Diversion Services. Referrals are made in cooperation with the Iowa City, Coralville, and North Liberty Police Departments, the Johnson County Sheriff's Department, and the Iowa City Community School District.

Johnson County Disorderly
Conduct Diversion Program



A second chance for youth to
build on your strengths,
make safe decisions for yourself
and for our community, and
stay out of the
juvenile justice system

Elements of LADDERS

- Quick response
- One-on-one interaction
- Transportation provided
- Short program (4 hours)
- Parents not required to participate
- Failure to complete ≠ referral



Follow the data...

- School charges reduced 61% over the first 2 years
- Disorderly conduct school charges reduced from 40 to 18
- Charges of Black/African-American youth reduced from 90% to 50%

LADDERS Results Through FY19

- 95 referrals: 70 Black/African-American youth, 5 Hispanic youth
- ALL completed successfully!
- 13 youth reoffended with assault-type behavior



What's next?

Expand pre-charge
diversion to ALL simple
misdemeanors

Why?

Follow the data!

➤ Felonies

➤ B – 5

➤ C – 16

➤ D - 16

➤ Misdemeanors

➤ Agg – 61

➤ Serious – 139

➤ **Simple – 240**

➤ Other- 41